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FILE ONLY

Military aid for Salvador, contras OK'd

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WASHINGTON — The Senate Appropriations Committee handed President Reagan a major victory Wednesday for his Central American strategy by approving about \$114 million in emergency military aid to El Salvador and to CIA-backed Nicaraguan insurgents.

Only seven days earlier, the same Senate panel — led by Sen. Mark Hatfield, a liberal Republican from Oregon — had rejected the Nicaragua request and had postponed action on the Salvador funds.

The two pieces of legislation are the current focal points in political warfare over Reagan's policy of helping the government of El Salvador fight Marxist-led guerrillas, and the guerrillas of Nicaragua fight a Marxist-led government. Both bills have been tacked to unrelated legislation that would provide food relief from a devastating drought in Africa.

"What the Appropriations Committee did is a positive step, a step forward for the President's Central American policies," said James Michel, deputy assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs.

The requests, with the African food aid bill, must still win approval of the full Senate and then the House. It may take weeks for the measures to clear Congress — if approved — before Reagan can sign them into law and begin disbursing the funds.

The food bill would provide as much as \$150 million in relief aid to 18 African countries suffering from long-lasting droughts.

Reagan's Central American requests add nearly \$93 million to resupply the Salvadoran armed forces and \$21 million to resupply the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries, or contras.

The administration argues that it needs the emergency money for El Salvador because government forces there are about to run out of supplies at a time when they need to protect the March 25 presidential election from guerrilla attacks.

Sen. Robert Kastenmeier (R., Wis.), the Appropriations Committee member who offered the Salvador amendment, said the administration "is convinced that without these funds, the Salvadoran army will collapse."

In an effort to appease opponents of Reagan's policy in El Salvador, Kastenmeier added a requirement for the President to submit a report to Congress certifying whether the Salvadoran government has "demonstrated progress" toward holding free elections, restoring the "rule of law" and eliminating rightist death squads.

Kastenmeier's requirement, however, would not hold up the funds, as foes of the President's policy would like. In fact, in a 21-3 vote, the committee defeated another amendment offered by Republican Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania that would have held up 50 per cent of the \$92.75 million until the Salvadoran government activated a special unit of prosecutors and investigators to crack down on the death squads.

Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D., Ariz.) did succeed in amending Kastenmeier's rider by requiring that the presidential certification reports be submitted every 60 days rather than every six months, as was required by previous legislation. DeConcini's amendment also would force the administration to include information in that report about how the Salvadoran armed forces use U.S. military funds.

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A fact sheet prepared by the State Department and obtained by The Herald provided a detailed breakdown of the emergency fund request for El Salvador.

The breakdown includes \$13.5 million to provide four UH1H helicopters and 44 field ambulances; \$11 million for ammunition; \$13.1 million to continue training Salvadoran soldiers; \$13 million to purchase troop transport trucks and "associated equipment"; \$12.9 million to equip nine battalions to be trained in May and July; \$4 million for tactical communications equipment; and \$9.2 million for spare parts.

After the vote on the Kastenmeier amendment, Sen. Daniel Inouye (D., Hawaii) announced that when the African drought relief bill comes to the floor he will offer an amendment to slash the amount in the Salvador military aid rider to \$49.25 million.

The rider containing \$21 million for the Nicaragua covert operation was offered by Sen. Ted Stevens (R., Alaska), who said the CIA-backed rebels could run out of funds and supplies by May 1.

Despite approval of \$21 million for the Nicaraguan rebels, the CIA would be allowed to use only \$7 million right away if the measure passes the full Congress. The balance, \$14 million, would go into a special reserve fund. To obtain its release, the CIA would be required to return to Congress to justify the need for additional money.

This is what the Senate Intelligence Committee recommended Tuesday in a secret session in which the division of the funds was approved by a vote of 14-0.

Last Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee rejected the request for the Nicaraguan rebels by a 15-14 vote. Committee members have explained that they voted that way not because they oppose CIA covert aid to the guerrillas but because the administration had bypassed the Senate Intelligence Committee in seeking additional funds.

In other action in the Appropriations Committee, Sen. Jim Sasser unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit further U.S. military construction in Honduras.

The Tennessee Democrat's amendment passed but was later amended by Sen. J. Bennett John-

ston (D., La.). Johnston's amendment would allow the administration to continue building facilities in Honduras for joint maneuvers with Honduran forces as long as they are temporary.